

DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

"Redemption"

8/5/12

Verses from New Living Translation unless noted.

Although my name is Ralph, I am sometimes referred to in other ways. My children call me Dad and my grandchildren call me granddad. Those are two of my favorite designations.

Because of my role here at Camarillo Community Church I am sometimes called pastor. In the original language of the NT the word meant "shepherd"; one who tends herds or flocks, and was a metaphor for one who is called to serve and give oversight to God's flock, the church.

Sometimes with those who don't know me well I might simply be referred to as Sir. I've even been called "Reverend" though feel God is the only One we should truly revere. Nevertheless, I have just one name—Ralph.

Similarly, while God has just one name, Jehovah, many designations of deity are found in the Bible. As the titles dad or granddad tell something about me, so the designations used of God, tell us something about Him.

Elohim is a plural form which is used more than **twenty-five hundred times** in the OT. Coupled with a descriptive phrase it can tell us something about God; for example, "**the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land**" found in **Jonah 1:9**. This description calls attention to His work as Creator.

The expression "**the God of all the earth**" from **Isaiah 54:5** emphasizes His sovereignty. The words, "**God who judges all the earth**" (**Psalm 58:11**) remind us of His justice and our accountability before Him.

There are many many others characterizations of God in scripture. But a designation that we will focus on this morning that has invaluable meaning to NT followers of Jesus is the term Redeemer.

Now redemption is not a frequently used word today; at least outside the church. If you hear it used it's usually in a partial narrow meaning.

For instance, when I was growing up grocery stores used to offer Green Stamps to encourage loyal patronage. They wanted you to come back and shop at their store exclusively so you could collect more Green Stamps.



The stamps were printed as a part of a popular loyalty marketing strategy back in the 1960's and 70's. The company behind the strategy was Sperry and Hutchinson – thus the name S & H Green Stamps.

Customers would receive stamps at the checkout counter of supermarkets, department stores, and gasoline stations among other retailers, and could redeem for products in the catalog.

There were even large "redemption centers" where you could go and see the products on display before you redeemed them.

Large signs were sometimes displayed on the sides of buildings letting potential customers know which retailer offered the coveted stamps.



Now the idea of redeeming green stamps is more like a simple exchange of currency and hardly fulfills the true definition of the term "redeem."

The original meaning meant to "buy back, repurchase; to free from what distresses or harms; to release from blame or debt."

Abraham Lincoln received his first impression of slavery in his childhood in Kentucky. His father and mother belonged to a small group of abolitionists, who at the beginning of the 1800's boldly denounced the institution as an evil.

As a young adult Lincoln made a trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans. John Hanks, a friend who accompanied him recalled that in New Orleans they witnessed a slave market and there saw slaves, chained, maltreated, whipped & scourged. "Lincoln saw it," Hanks wrote, "and his heart bled."

Letters released only a few years ago revealed that Abraham Lincoln as president considered trying to halt the civil war by buying slaves from the South for \$400 apiece. He later recognized the weakness the plan realizing emancipation was the only real solution.

There is a story that Lincoln once went down to the slave block and bought a slave girl. According to the story as the slave looked at the white man bidding on her, she figured he was just another white man, going to buy her and then abuse her.

He won the bid and as he was walking away with his property, he said, "Young lady, you are free." "What does that mean?" she asked cautiously. "It means you are free."

To free from distresses and harm: a fuller meaning of the word "redeem".

I recently came across a version of a story I've told many times about a young boy who spent weeks building a model sail boat. In this account the boat came up missing; someone had stolen it. One day in town the boy saw his boat in the window of a pawn shop.

He immediately went inside and told the store owner that the boat in the window was his but the store owner refused to let him have it. "Someone came in and sold me that boat. If you want it you will have to buy it."

The price the man required was far more than the young boy had and it took some time mowing lawns, doing chores and odd jobs to finally earn enough money to buy his boat. But walking out of the store with his boat in his hands, the boy held up the boat and

said, "Little boat, you are twice mine. I made you and now I bought you."

It's a simple story, but it illustrates a divine truth – we are twice His. God made us and then he bought us. He created us but then had to buy us back.

That's the meaning of redemption—to "buy back, repurchase; to free from what distresses or harms; to release from blame or debt."

Ruth's Kinsman Redeemer

There is a wonderful book in the OT written more than a thousand years before Jesus became our Redeemer. It introduces Jesus in the OT in a very beautiful way.

There are only two books in the Bible named after a woman and this is one of them – the book of Ruth. The setting of the book of Ruth is the latter part of the period of the Judges.

Now let me go back and review some Biblical history. The first book of the Bible is called Genesis. What does the word "Genesis" mean? It means beginnings or origin.

Genesis records the beginning of everything; the world, human history, civilization. It sets the stage for the entire Bible. After the creation of the cosmos, the world and everything in it, God climaxes all this with the creation of human kind, in his own image.

Of all he created, only people are created in his image. He gave us a garden paradise to enjoy where our every need was met. Yet people chose to sin, rebel against God, and caused a separation in the relationship.

Now we are lost in the bondage of sin and have incurred an unpayable debt. All this set the stage for God's plan of redemption; God's plan to buy us back and to set us free.

This plan is illustrated and foreshadowed a number of times in the OT, and one of the most beautiful is a love story from the book of Ruth.

The story begins with a man name Elimelech and his wife Naomi. They live in a little town called Bethlehem. There is your first clue to where this might be heading. The man and his wife have two sons, Mahlon and Kilion.

Because that part of Palestine is experiencing a severe famine, Elimelech sold his property and moved his family to Moab, a neighboring country where the economy was better. But not too long after, Elimelech dies leaving Naomi with two boys.

The boys soon marry and then the boys die. We are not told the circumstances of their deaths; only that Naomi is now alone with her two daughters-in-law. News however comes from Judah that the economy has turned around and Naomi decides to return home.

She encourages her daughters-in-law to go back to their own homes in hopes of finding new husbands and beginning again. One named Orpah does, but the other, Ruth has a special bond with her mother-in-law that causes her to refuse to abandon her. So instead she accompanies Naomi back to Bethlehem.

Naomi and Ruth are now widows and there is hardly a more desperate situation. They have no property; it's been sold. They have little money and no way to provide for themselves. But they did return at an opportune time; it's harvest season. Because of the advantageous climate of the region, there are two harvests; one in the spring and one in the fall.

It is spring and the harvest is plentiful. And Ruth takes advantage of a Jewish law that required farmers to leave the corners of the fields unharvested and also grain dropped by the harvesters be left on the ground so that the poor could glean in the fields.

It was part of God's welfare system for the disadvantaged. Ruth goes out and begins to glean in the field of a wealthy and

influential businessman from Bethlehem named Boaz, who just happened to be a relative of Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband.

While she was there gleaning, Boaz came out from town to check on the harvesters and notices the young woman gleaning in his field. When Boaz asked the foreman about her he's told that she is the young woman who returned from Moab with Naomi.

She had asked permission earlier that morning to be able to glean behind the harvesters. The foreman remarked about how hard and tirelessly she had been working. Boaz went over to Ruth, introduced himself and instructed her not to glean in anyone else's fields.

Evidently concerned for an attractive young woman he warned the young men in his field not to bother her and invited her to help herself to the water provided for his workers when she got thirsty.

Ruth thanked him profusely and asked, "Why are you being so kind to me? How is it that I, a foreigner have found such grace in your eyes?"

"I know who you are," Boaz replied, "and I know about the love and kindness that you have shown to your mother-in-law since the death of your husband.

I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land, to live here among complete strangers. May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done."

Ruth was extremely grateful and comforted by all his kind words. Later at lunch time Boaz invited her over to have lunch with his servants. Then he instructed his men to have her gather grain right behind them and to intentionally drop extra grain on the ground for her.

When Ruth returned home that night Naomi couldn't believe how much grain she had. "Where did you get all this," she asked? Ruth told her about the kind man who had been so generous to her and then told her his name was Boaz.

Naomi knew immediately who he was. "This man is one of our closest relatives. He is a kinsman redeemer," a term probably unfamiliar to Ruth.

Now a "kinsman redeemer" was part of another special law in Israel. Land in Israel was a permanent possession and if sold Naomi's was, it was always available for repurchase by the original family.

Naomi had no money but Boaz did and if he were interested he could pick up that option of a kinsman redeemer. However, it would also obligate him to marry Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, the son who would have inherited the land.

Naomi devises a good Jewish mother-in-law scheme to prompt the seemingly hesitant Boaz to make his move. If you read the story and I strongly encourage you to, it sounds a little forward and certainly risky, but it works and Boaz proposes marriage.

He has to work out some logistical details but in time Boaz and Ruth are married because Boaz, as a kinsman redeemer steps in and buys back the land that belonged to Naomi's husband. And, he rescues Naomi and Ruth from hopeless poverty and destitution.

Of course, something they could have never known is that they would be the great grandparents of King David of Israel and also in the Messianic line of Jesus a 1000 years later.

Now I've briefly told you the story of Ruth, skipping a lot, but I'll let you go home and read in and fill in the blanks. But in order to get to our main lesson this morning I need to point out that the book needs to be read on several levels.

First, it's an historical book. It actually happened; it's history and intended to be understood that way. But it's also a practical book. There are many practical lessons to be learned from the loyalty of

Ruth to her mother-in-law; from Boaz's generosity and compassion.

But more to our intention this morning, there is a spiritual component of this book that God wants us to see; a hidden message if you will. There is a story beneath the story.

Let me introduce you to a verse in the OT book of Hosea which though you might have read it, you've not noticed this little clue that the verse gives us for understanding much of the OT.

The verse is Hosea 12:10 and it reads, (actually it's God speaking here) and he says, "I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets."

The NKJ version uses the word symbols. The old King James uses the word "similitudes." When I typed that word into my computer is underlined it in red, telling me it wasn't a word. That's how out of date the word is.

The NLT which I use most frequently says "parables." That's the value of multiple translations. When you don't quite understand what a word means or even a passage, try another translation. All these translators have more language training than most of us and their work can be helpful.

Now what I think Hosea is telling us is that there are stories in the Bible, stories that God has given us that are not only historical and practical, but there is often an underlying message; a parabolic message; a similitude is there if you study it closely. God uses stories of the OT to illustrate NT and contemporary truths. And today, in the story of Ruth, if we look closely, we can see the story of Jesus.

Romans 3:23-24 (NIV) "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

The story of Ruth is a story of redemption and the story of Jesus is a story of redemption. In fact, I think you could say that there are two major stories in the Bible, the story of creation and the story of recreation; the forming of his creation and the reformation of his creation.

Or, to go back to our story of the boy and his boat, the making and the buying back: God's making of creation and the buying back of his creation – the story of Redemption.

Now in that story of redemption, God often uses the tragedy of slavery to illustrate our human predicament. Without God's intervention, you and I are hopelessly enslaved to self and sin. We are forced to live in bondage to Satan and his kingdom.

Enslaved by sin and guilt, we are unable to liberate ourselves. Jesus said, "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin...." John 8:34

Sin traps us and holds us, rendering us powerless to escape its chains. Consequently, try as hard as we might, we are unable to overcome our sin.

It might be lust, uncontrollable anger, drugs, pornography, envy, covetousness, lying, materialism, destructive behavior, harmful attitudes, or whatever. In our natural, unredeemed state we are at the mercy of sin; powerless against it.

In spite of the fact that sin ruins relationships, wrecks lives and brings untold pain, misery and regret we can't seem to overcome it. It's as if we were chained. Our only hope is Christ who can redeem us, setting us free from sin's penalty and its power in our daily lives.

Describing what God has done for us, Paul says in verse 7, "...in Christ we have redemption through his blood."

To redeem something is to deliver it on payment of a ransom. Christ offers to set us free from bondage to sin through the ransom price of his blood.

Three things were required in order for a kinsman to redeem:

- He must be near of kin. (Leviticus 25:48; 25:25 Ruth 3:12–13)
- He must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4–6). He must be free of any peril or need of redemption himself.
- He must be willing to redeem (Ruth 4:6ff)

1ST JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN THROUGH THE INCARNATION.

A kinsman redeemer had to be a close relative. It was impossible for God to save us apart from the incarnation of Christ. God could not die for us because God cannot die. He is eternal life and He is the source of all life. Only by being born as a man and taking on human flesh could He experience death for us.

Thus Jesus had to become man in order to redeem man.

"He (*God*) sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins." Romans 8:3

He was like us in every way except that He never sinned. In order to identify Himself with us, "He gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being..." Philippians 2:7

But not only that, when we receive him as our savior, we actually become part of the family of God; his kinsmen; his relatives.

John 1:12 "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God."

Jesus is our older brother.

2ND JESUS IS ABLE TO REDEEM US.

Every year the city of Tucson, Az. holds a Gem and Mineral Show; the largest in the United States. This year will be the 59th annual.

A gem dealer was strolling the aisles at the



Tucson Gem and Mineral Show when he noticed a blue-violet stone the size and shape of a potato. He looked it over, then, as calmly as possible, asked the vendor, "You want \$15 for this?"



The seller, realizing the rock wasn't as pretty as others in the bin, lowered the price to \$10.

That stone was later certified as a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire, about 800 carats larger than the largest stone of its kind. It was appraised at \$2.28 million.

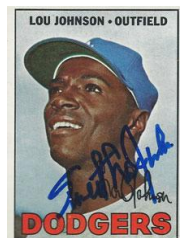
We dare not overlook the value of what Christ has done for us.

1 Peter 1:18-19 "For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God."

Jesus paid with his own blood. You may question your value but he doesn't. There is nothing more valuable in all of creation than the blood of Christ, and that's what bought your freedom. He assumed our debt and paid it with His life.

When we come to Christ with a sense of need and a spirit of repentance, God redeems us and pours out His grace upon us. He blesses us in countless life-changing ways.

Leftfielder Lou Johnson was a 1965 World Series hero for the Los Angeles Dodgers, having eight hits, including two home runs, the second one being the game-winning run in the decisive seventh game.



It was his premier season. Lou's life went downhill from there. Drugs and alcohol abuse cost him everything from that magical season, including his uniform, glove, and the bat he used to hit the winning home run in the deciding game.

He spent 30 years trying to recover the championship ring he lost to drug dealers in 1971.

When the Dodgers president, Bob Graziano, learned that Johnson's World Series ring was about to be auctioned on the Internet, he immediately wrote a check for \$3,457 and bought the ring before any bids were posted.

Graziano did for Johnson what the former Dodger outfielder had been unable to do for himself.

A kinsman redeemer must be close kin, they have to have the resources to redeem, and

3RD JESUS IS WILLING TO REDEEM US

Jesus said, "No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily." John 10:18

Jesus is referring to His voluntary, sacrificial, vicarious, and obedient payment to affect the release of slaves or captives from bondage to sin and Satan's kingdom.

Jesus has paid the price in full and I have received my redemption.

A part of Ruth's story that I skipped over was about a kinsman redeemer who was not willing to redeem.

In 1927, in West Africa, a blood specimen was taken from a native man named Asibi, who was sick with yellow fever.

A vaccine was made from the original strain of the virus obtained from this man. In fact, all the vaccine manufactured since 1927 by the Rockefeller Foundation and health agencies, derives from the original strain of virus obtained from this one man.

Carried down to the present day from one laboratory to another, through repeated cultures and by enormous multiplication, the serum developed has offered immunity to yellow fever to millions of people around the world.

Through the blood of this one man in the West Africa healing has been made available to serve the whole human race.

In another, more important way, the blood of another Man, Jesus Christ, has been made to serve the human race. "In him (*Christ*) we have redemption through his blood..." Ephesians 1:7

When we come to this communion table, we find release and freedom and joy, because of the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus made.